Employment, Disability Status, and Job Quality

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Issue: People with disabilities (PWD) have lower labor force participation and employment. PWD comprise 10.2% of the working-age population.

Question: Do inequalities extend among the employed? Among those with a disability who are employed, how do they fare in the workforce? Do they have “good jobs”?

Short answer: U.S. workers with disabilities are less likely to have “good jobs” compared to workers with no disability. This finding is repeated using different measures (of both job quality and of disability), controlling for other covariates of job quality, and looking at different populations.

Analysis 1: Pay & benefits
Job Quality Measure: A job that offers health insurance benefits, pays higher than median wages, and offers a retirement program.
Findings: At bivariate level, PWD less likely to have a “good job”; after controlling for other factors, these differences are minimal.

Analysis 2: Benefits & other factors
Population studied: Workers with more than 3 days of activity limitations due to poor physical or mental health on the 2014 & 2018 General Social Survey.
Job Quality Measure: Worker self-assessment of 6 dimensions (at right).
Findings: Workers with more health limitation days (HLD) reported lower levels of job quality in all aspects, even after controlling for other socio-demographic characteristics.

Analysis 3: Intrinsic job quality
Population studied: College graduates who self-reported any of six disability questions and were employed full time on the 2017 National Survey of College Graduates.
Job Quality Measure: Intrinsic qualities of work (IQW), including autonomy, powerfullness, meaningfulness, and self-fulfillment
Finding: After controlling for other factors, workers with a disability had 29% lower odds of having a job high in intrinsic job quality compared to those with no disability.

Analysis 4: Job quality & job tenure
Population studied: Our own online survey of workers. Disability is assessed as either having functional difficulties in 5 areas or having a psychiatric or developmental disability diagnosis.
Job Quality Measure: Constructed from 8 questions asking about job security, benefits, safety & health, respect, autonomy, supervisory support, work/life balance, and stress.
Finding: PWD have shorter job tenure than others when controlling for job quality, individual characteristics, and job characteristics.

Conclusions
Understanding employment patterns means looking at a variety of measures, not just labor force participation.
There are different ways to assess job quality. For some measures, workers with a disability have substantially lower rates of job quality than workers with no disability.

List of our publications

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